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ABSTRACT

The American system of higher education consists of public and private institutions, of which there are three segments: universities, four-year institutions, and two-year colleges. Further, there are three types of two-year colleges: comprehensive community colleges, offering a broad array of programs and services; junior colleges, focusing on transfer courses that apply to degree programs at four-year institutions; and vocational/technical colleges that focus on certificates or degrees or are a part of tech-prep programs. While institutional mission statements vary, the themes of meeting community needs and creating a dynamic, prosperous community appear in many two-year college missions. However, the familial, educational, and social foundations of civil society are currently in crisis, as evidenced by rising divorce rates, low reading rates of minority children, increasing amounts of television watched by school children, and increasing numbers of young people held in juvenile facilities. Specific examples of community colleges working to solve these problems and build community include a child development/child care center at New Mexico's Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute; a science, engineering, and mathematics academy for underrepresented students and a center for applied gerontology at Ohio's Cuyahoga Community College; a mentoring program for at-risk middle school students developed by Oregon's Chemeketa Community College; and a program to enable citizens to participate in community planning at Florida Community College at Jacksonville. (Contains 20 references.) (HAA)

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THE ROLE OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN BUILDING COMMUNITY

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THE ROLE OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN BUILDING COMMUNITY

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Overview

Communitarians believe that "the key to repairing our civic and moral culture is in strengthening the basic social institutions of family, school, community, and society" (The Communitarian Network, n.d.). In this paper, the role of American community colleges in building community is explored. In the first section of this paper, a brief history, description, and summary of the context affecting the American community college will be presented. Because Communitarians believe that two primary building blocks of community are the family and education, in the second section, current indicators of the state of the family and education in the U.S., and some general American societal indicators, will be reported. Third, selected examples of American community colleges building community will be summarized.

The American System of Higher Education

American System of Higher Education

The American system of higher education consists of *public* (primarily government and/or taxpayer supported) and *private* institutions (funded primarily

through tuition and private benefactors, although grants may also be awarded). In each of these two sectors in which there are a total of approximately 3,600 institutions (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1995, p. 5) there are three segments: *universities, four-year institutions,* and *two-year colleges.* The total of universities and four-year institutions is 2,169 and there are approximately 1,496 public and private two-year institutions (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1995, p. 5). The two-year colleges are not evenly distributed among the fifty states; rather, they are roughly in proportion (though not always) to the population of the state. For example, California, a very large state, has 108 public two-year institutions, and Rhode Island, a small state in both population and square miles, has but one (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1995, p. 7).

Comparing Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment of U.S. Universities and Colleges

Type	4-Year	2-Year
Public	6,000,000	5,400,000
Private	2,900,000	230,000

(Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1995, p. 5)

America's public two-year colleges (most of which are comprehensive community colleges) enroll nearly as many full-time equivalent (FTE) students each year as do the universities and four-year institutions. There are several types of two-year

colleges in America:

1. Comprehensive Community Colleges
2. Junior Colleges
3. Vocational/Technical Colleges

Comprehensive Community Colleges

Comprehensive community colleges offer a broad array of programs and services, believing that their mission is to meet the educational needs of the communities they serve. Typically, at least the following five areas are implemented in a comprehensive community college: transfer, vocational/technical, adult education, continuing education, and general or development education programs.

Transfer courses focus on general college education coursework that will transfer to a four-year institution or university. Students who enroll in transfer courses often plan to finish a baccalaureate degree (four-year), or possibly go on to graduate school or professional training. Community college personnel work with area four-year colleges and universities (especially those in the college's state) to articulate their coursework. This means that the courses completed by the student will be "accepted in" by the receiving college or university, often by virtue of written agreements between the two institutions that have been worked out to apply to all transfer students. Students who complete the requirements of a transfer curriculum receive an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree from the community

college.

Vocational/technical programs lead to certificates or associate of science degrees when completed. Generally, the programs offered have been selected because of a need in the community or the state for individuals trained or upgraded in these skills. Community colleges are also increasingly working with local business and industry to design and update courses and access equipment consistent with that currently used in the area. These programs range from computer-aided design or manufacturing, welding, plastic molding, and allied health programs, to business and word processing. Large community colleges may offer up to one hundred vocational/technical programs.

Adult education programs include offerings such as adult basic education (ABE), preparation for the General Education Development high school completion equivalency test (GED), and English as a Second Language (ESL). These are non-college credit courses, but frequently must be completed before students may enroll in college level courses. Often large numbers of students are enrolled in adult education programs.

Continuing education programs (also generally noncredit) range from professional certification courses for the nation's health care professionals and educators (these often carry certification credit in a particular field), to courses for personal and professional development, such as study skills, notetaking, or

conversational foreign languages.

General or developmental education programs offer remedial or developmental coursework, particularly in math, reading, and writing to bring the students' skills to beginning college level. Sixty to ninety percent of entering community college students need to be "remediated" (Richardson & Bender, 1987, p. 3). Not unlike other countries, the United States is concerned about illiteracy. At least 20% of Americans have been judged to be functionally illiterate (Roueche & Roueche, 1993, p. 3). General or developmental programs are designed to teach literacy skills in reading and math, and to improve student writing levels.

Junior Colleges

These college focus on offering transfer courses that apply to degree programs at four-year institutions, certificates, and associate degrees. They usually also offer general or developmental education programs to assist all students with developing college-level skills in reading, writing, and math.

Vocational/Technical Colleges or Institutes

Vocational/technical programs that lead to certificates or degrees, or are part of tech-prep programs are the focus for these institutions. Many also offer general or developmental education programs. Tech-prep programs bridge the last two years of high school and one or two years in a community college. They are designed to provide students with academic and technical preparation. Reasoning, problem

solving, and communication skills are also covered in this integrated approach to education. Fast growing occupations in the U.S. include human health aides, human services workers, home care aides, computer engineers, systems analysts, physical therapy assistants, paralegals, and teachers, all skills taught in the community college. Generally the decisions regarding which programs will be offered are made if there is community need, access to trained instructors, the college's ability to purchase or use up-to-date equipment, and other resources to implement the program.

The American Community College's Commitment to Building Community

The American community college's commitment to building community was evident within several years of its inception. The first junior college (Joliet Junior College in Illinois) was founded in 1902 and focused on providing the first two years of university study. Enough community, junior, and technical colleges had been founded by 1920 that a national association representing all of America's two-year colleges was established and named the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC). In 1925, AAJC amended its official definition of the junior college to include:

> The junior college may, and is likely to, develop a different type of curriculum suited to the larger and ever-changing civic, social, religious, and vocational needs of the entire community in which the college is

located. (Bogue, 1950, p. xvii, as cited in Roueche, Taber, & Roueche, 1995, p. 28.)

To reflect a growing emphasis on community, in 1972, AAJC changed its name to the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). "In 1992, the next organizational transition resulted in the taking of a third name--the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The community college was now longer to be junior to the universities; it had developed a separate identity--one with the community it served precisely at its center" (Roueche, Taber, & Roueche, 1995, p. 29).

The broad objectives of today's community colleges are reflected in these two mission statements:

> Kirkwood Community College identifies community needs, provides accessible, quality education and training, and promotes opportunities for lifelong learning.
>
> Kirkwood Community College
>
> Cedar Rapids, Iowa
>
> We are dedicated to meaningful learning and excellent teaching, enabling individuals to achieve their hopes, dreams, and full potential, and to being a leading partner in creating a dynamic, prosperous community of enlightened

leaders and thoughtful, effective, global citizens.

Florida Community College at Jacksonville

Jacksonville, Florida

While each institutions' mission statement is different, the themes of meeting community needs and "creating a dynamic, prosperous community" appear in many of them. This paper includes examples of ways many American two-year colleges collaborate with others to build community. The variations in college missions influence the types of community-building activities developed by each institution. Communitarians believe that the foundations of civil society rest in our families, schools, and neighborhoods, and that it is through these institutions that we acquire a sense of our personal and civic responsibilities, an appreciation of our rights *and* the rights of others, and a commitment to the welfare of the community and its members.

Unfortunately, current indicators demonstrate that each of these foundation blocks may be crumbling. As an important backdrop to the remainder of this presentation, I will mention a few indicators in each of three areas: the family, education, and the general society.

The Current State of Community in America

Selected Family Indicators

- America's image of the "average American family," that is, married couples

with children, is anything but average. Only 26% of American families met this profile in the 1990 census. This was down from 31% in 1980 and 40% in 1970 (Ginsberg, 1992, p. 5).

- As a measure of the current divorce rate, we looked at the number of persons being married and divorced. In 1990, 9.7 individuals per 1,000 married and 4.7 per 1,000 divorced. In 1970 10.6 of 1,000 married and 3.5 of 1,000 divorced. We conclude that fewer individuals are being married and more are being divorced in 1990, compared to 1970 (Ginsberg, 1992, p. 7). Divorce has just overtaken death as the leading cause of fatherlessness in the United States, and out-of-wedlock births are expected to surpass divorce as a cause of fatherlessness later in the 1990s. "These out-of-wedlock births accounted for 30% of all births by 1991...and there is substantial evidence that having an unmarried father is even worse for a child than having a divorced father." (Popenoe, 1996, p. 14).
- 10M families are single parent families and 87% of these are fatherless (Ginsberg, 1992, p. 8).
- 10% of American children live without either natural parent in the home (Ginsberg, 1996, p. 26).
- The exact numbers of latchkey kids--children whose parent(s) are not home when they get home from school, leaving them on their own to do as they

please--is not known. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that in 1991 more than 1.6M 5 to 14-year-olds could be classified as latchkey children, (Sharpe, 1994, p. A5). These youth are particularly vulnerable to influences their parent(s) might not approve of, such as involvement in gangs, drugs, or uncensored TV (Minow, 1996).

Selected Educational Indicators

- 23 million (of the 260M population of *all* Americans) American adults are functionally illiterate (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 8).
- **In a 1992 study comparing reading and comprehension of 4th and 9th graders in 32 nations, U.S. fourth graders performed better than all others except the** Finnish children (U.S. Children, 1966). American ninth graders scored below the Finns, but about the same as children of the same age in 15 other countries. This could be good news, depending on the level of comprehension and reading ability of the highest scoring students. However, in the U.S., while 70% of white children read at average levels, only 30% to 40% of African American and 50% of Hispanic children read at average levels in America. Further, poor students don't read as well as wealthier children, and students being raised by two biological parents or a single mother read better than students with other family structures (U.S. Children, 1996, p. 4A).

- Almost 30% of America's entering high school freshmen fail to graduate. In urban centers, the percentage grows to 50% or 60% (Bell & Elmquist, 1991, p. 1)
- Less than 50% of U.S. college graduates can accurately describe the main argument in a newspaper editorial, interpret a bus schedule, or calculate the amount of a tip at a restaurant (Bell & Elmquist, 1991, p. 85).

Other Societal Indicators

- The percentage of white Americans who believe race relations in the U.S. are "only fair" or "poor" is 84%; for blacks, the percent is 92% (Editors, 1996, p. 63).
- American kids watch an average of 24 hours per week of television (Minow, 1996). They are participating in the TV experience more hours than the hours they are in school (assuming perfect attendance): 18,000 hours watching TV each year compared to spending 13,000 hours per year in the classroom (Chen, 1996).
- A meta-analysis quoted by Minow (1996) of over 3,000 studies conducted on the effect of TV violence on children over the last 20 years, indicated that ***some*** children become violent, and ***many*** children **ACCEPT** violence as a result of their viewing.
- Young people held in public juvenile facilities in the U.S. increased 17% for

those aged 10 to 13 years between 1987 and 1989 (Maguire, K., & Flanagan, T.J., 1991, p. 572).

- A lack of civility seems to be on the increase. For example, a coalition of U.S. flight attendant unions has formed a task force to study the problem of passengers who assault crew members (Roche & Frank, 1996). Instances of "crew interference" reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 1995 were 128, but anecdotely, crew members know these numbers are significantly understated. One airline recently reported ninety-four cases in just one year. Sample incidents often involve the use of too much alcohol: a Saudi Arabian princess scratched a TWA flight attendant; 18 British and Irish passengers ran "amok on a flight, pushing other passengers and hurling food"(pp. 52-59); and a well-known columnist and talk show guest passenger assaulted a flight attendant who tried to stop her from using her laptop computer during landing.
- Today there seems to be less value in striving for honesty. People are also increasingly think in terms of "technical honesty"-- that is, their behavior or words describe a technical truth, leaving the real truth (which might create difficult [or worse] consequences to others) unrevealed.
- There is a certain abandonment of responsibility for our actions in the way we talk about our behavior. A recent article in U.S. News & World Report

(Herbert, 1996) presented a disturbing anecdote. A parent's six-year-old was caught stealing at school. The parent met with the teacher with the idea of coming up with a strategy that would impress upon the child that *stealing* is unacceptable. But the teacher's astonishing response was, "We don't use the word 'stealing here.' We call it '*uncooperative behavior*' (p. 56)." Calling the response a "foolish excess of the self-esteem movement"(p. 56), the author of the article went on to talk about an alternative point of view which holds that it is critical for parents and other adults to present American children with a united front of similar moral values.

Selected Ways American Community Colleges are Initiating and/or Actively Participating in Building Community

Following are examples of community college programs that impact (a) the American family; (b) the American educational experience; and (c) societal values, give citizens opportunities to dialogue about their civil rights and responsibilities, and provide opportunities for participation in local government.

Examples of Community College Programs That Impact The American Family

TRES MANOS–A HELPING HAND TO CHILDREN

(Tres Manos means three hands)
Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Partners:
- ✓ Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute
- ✓ City of Albuquerque
- ✓ Area neighborhood associations

Service: The Tres Manos Child Development Center
- ✓ Child care for low-income college students and neighborhood residents
- ✓ fees: sliding scale based on income and family size

Problem: The college needed to expand, but the building and land on which the Heights Community Center was located seemed to be the only available land near the College. The community did not want to lose their last reminder of their formerly close-knit neighborhood. The city and the college discussed the problem at length and decided to call in a mediator. Decision: community center would stay and child care center was built beside the existing, historical, community center.

Source: Canine, D., Gilliland, R., (Ed.), Harris, B., Lee, M., Mittelstet, S., & Taber, L.S., (1996, January). Community Colleges: A Vital Resource for a Communitarian Society. Washington, D.C.: The Communitarian Network.

THE OVERTOWN COMMUNITY PROJECT

Miami-Dade Community College's Medical Center Campus, Miami, Florida

Partners:
- ✓ local, state, and national entities
- ✓ private foundations

Objectives: Help neighborhood residents reclaim and revitalize their community, through developing the skills of the residents, providing an encouraging environment, supporting infrastructure systems changes, and

providing educational opportunities.

Activities: There are many activities underway, but some are "helping to organize groups of citizens, providing technical assistance in neighborhood transformation, and work with family, child care, and health issues...."

Source: Roueche, J.E., Taber, L. S, & Roueche, S.D. (1995). The Company We Keep: Collaboration in the Community College. Washington, DC: Community College Press, p. 356.

THE SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS, AND AEROSPACE ACADEMY (SEMAA)

Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio

Objective: Provide opportunities for traditionally underrepresented middle and secondary school students to explore math, science, and engineering careers. Parent involvement is emphasized.

Activities:

- ✓ after-school, early evening, and Saturday classes
- ✓ summer camps
- ✓ field trips
- ✓ mentorships/internships in Cleveland businesses

Source: Roueche, et al., 1996, pp.129 & 362.

THE CENTER FOR APPLIED GERONTOLOGY

Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio

Objective: Provide special services for an underserved and growing aged population.

One Program: Family members who serve as caregivers to elderly living at home or in the caregivers home (currently about 95% of American elderly) have the opportunity for family caregiver training.

Source: Roueche, et al., 1996, p. 333.

Examples of Community Building Programs that Impact American Education

PROJECT MOST (MINORITY OPPORTUNITY SKILLS TRAINING)
Mercer County Community College, Trenton, New Jersey

Partners:
- ✓ Mercer County Community College
- ✓ State of New Jersey

Program:
- ✓ recruits and pre-trains minorities to enter New Jersey computer operations and data processing training programs
- ✓ students study math, reading, computers
- ✓ get job counseling

Special: Participants guaranteed full-time employment with the State Treasury Department.

Source: Canine, et. al., 1996, p. 24.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MENTORING
Chemeketa Community College, Salem, Oregon

Program: Chemeketa students are volunteer mentors to middle school students who are dropout risks.

Services/Outcomes:
- ✓ study skills
- ✓ learn about the importance of staying in school
- ✓ learn about career options
- ✓ improve self-concept

Source: Canine, et. al., 1996, p. 24.

COLLEGE AND HOUSING AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIP
Midlands Technical College, Columbia, South Carolina

Partners:
Midlands Technical College
The City of Columbia

Objectives: Encourage residents of low-income housing to further their education, learn a job skill to assure employability, work their way off public

assistance, and move out of public housing.

Programs: Over 400 students of all ages have participated in:

- ✓ on-site placement testing
- ✓ post-test counseling
- ✓ support services to residents
- ✓ tutoring
- ✓ graduates & current students of college serve as counselors and role models
- ✓ residents apply for financial aid and Housing Authority pays for what financial aid grants do not cover

Funding Sources:

- ✓ Midlands Technical College
- ✓ Federal programs targeting education opportunities for low- income families

Source: Canine, et al., 1996, p. 31.

NEW BEGINNINGS PROGRAM--Literacy Partnerships
Florida Community College at Jacksonville
Jacksonville, Florida

Partners:

- ✓ Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- ✓ Florida Community College at Jacksonville
- ✓ Duval County School Board

Services: These family literacy programs for residents of four HUD residences:

- ✓ adult basic education
- ✓ GED instruction
- ✓ child care
- ✓ parent-child activities
- ✓ mother & child literacy training at four elementary school

Special: Award from National Alliance of Business in 1992 for this program.

Source: Roueche, et al., 1996, p. 339.

Examples of Community College Programs That Impact Societal Values, Give Citizen Opportunities to Dialogue About Civil Rights and Responsibilities, or Provide Opportunities for Participation in Their Local Governments

STUDENT VOLUNTEER SERVICES PROGRAM

Vincennes University (a two-year, comprehensive community college)
Vincennes, Indiana

Program: In 1994, over 400 students contributed more than 13,000 hours of volunteer service connected directly back to in-class course activities and requirements.

Services:

- ✓ built and repaired sandbagged dikes during flooding conditions
- ✓ collected food for area food pantries
- ✓ participated in major fund raising for United Way
- ✓ collected toys for underprivileged children at Christmas

Source: Canine, et al., 1996, p. 28.

THE COMMUNITIES OF COLOR INSTITUTE (CCI)

Minneapolis Community College, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mission: Strengthen non-profit organizations serving communities of color, so that improved planning, marketing, and funding skills can enhance their effectiveness and impact.

Services:

- ✓ extensive evaluation of organization's structure and effectiveness
- ✓ management and board assessments
- ✓ strategic planning assistance
- ✓ workshops and seminars for management, board, and volunteers
- ✓ recruitment of and suggestions regarding board members for these organizations

Source: Canine, et al., 1996, p. 32

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

Florida Community College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville, Florida

Partners:
- ✓ Florida Community College at Jacksonville
- ✓ the Mayor's Office
- ✓ the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Leadership Jacksonville
- ✓ National Association of Community Leadership
- ✓ Citizens of Jacksonville

Objective: To plan a way to unite a metropolis of almost 800,000 people behind a shared vision and common goals.

Process Highlights:
- ✓ the college president served on the mayor's steering committee
- ✓ the college's open campus president recommended and subsequently led a "community trusteeship process" which she had helped develop and which has now been used in a number of American communities.
- ✓ all citizens were invited to participate
- ✓ Leadership Jacksonville alumni were trained as facilitators of small group discussions
- ✓ 800 citizens participated in 37 groups
- ✓ neighborhood meetings were held

Outcomes:
- ✓ a consensual city-wide vision with prioritized action objectives
- ✓ the mayor proposed and passed the $238 million "River City Renaissance" bond issue implementing many of the citizen's recommendations.

Source: Roueche, et al., 1996, p. 338.

PARTNERSHIP WITH NEBRASKA INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, Nebraska

Objective: Develop a sister institution relationship with an institution from a different nation or different culture, with the goal of learning from people of a different culture and sharing MCC's perspectives.

Process: Joint staff development, joint curricula and course development, shared community and cultural celebrations, co-teaching, and community member involvement in many college activities.

Beneficiaries: Faculty, staff, and students of both organizations and both communities. Source: Roueche, et al., 1996, pp. 52-53.

Summary

As these examples attest, many American community colleges actively participate as working partners in community building.

> "The diverse options available to community colleges as partners in their communities include functioning as convener, catalyst, connector, collaborator, change agent, conspirator, champion of the powerless, and even creator of controversy" (Gilliland, 1995, p. 44, as cited in Roueche, Taber, & Roueche, 1995).

And as the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges(1988) pivotal futures document Building Communities, stated:

> Community colleges and the nation's future are inextricably interlocked. At a time when societies values are shaped and revised by the fashion of the market place, the influence of the community college must grow outward from a core of integrity and confidence firmly rooted in humane goals that are currently lacking in too many of our societal institutions. Canine, et al. Communitarian Monograph, 1996, p. 47.

More than shoring up the basic social institutions of community, education, and family, the American community college strives to make an ongoing difference in the revitalization and strengthening of these critical building blocks of a vital society.

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